

# **Committee on Government Reform**

**Tom Davis, Chairman**



## **“Toward a Logical Governing Structure: Restoring Executive Reorganization Authority”**

**Opening Statement of Chairman Davis**

**Committee on Government Reform**

**April 3, 2003 at 10:00 a.m.**

**2154 Rayburn House Office Building**

Good morning and thank you for coming. The purpose of today’s hearing is to discuss the reauthorization of the executive reorganization authority, which grants the President the authority to initiate organizational changes within the executive branch.

Executive reorganization authority was first enacted as part of the Economy Act of 1932 under President Hoover and periodically reauthorized under Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, Carter, and Reagan, until it lapsed in 1984. Since then, despite interest in reorganization authority, in both the executive branch and in Congress, as a way to encourage the President to take the initiative in organizational management issues, momentum has not built up behind the authority until recently.

In the President’s Management Agenda, which was included as part of his Fiscal Year 2003 budget proposal, President Bush stated the following: “[t]he Administration will seek to re-institute permanent reorganization authority for the President to permit expedited legislative approval of plans to reorganize the Executive Branch.”

The management initiatives in the President’s Management Agenda offered an unprecedented focus on improving the management practices of the federal government. Unfortunately, the unforeseen debate over the creation of a Department of Homeland Security trumped any serious discussions in the last session of Congress regarding executive reorganization authority or the other initiatives included in the management agenda.

In the wake of the long and arduous debate on the creation of a new department, one thing is clear: given our current organizational structure in Congress, it is exceedingly difficult for Congress to undertake even the simplest reorganization of the executive branch. For example, for Congress to even consider a restructuring of the dozen federal offices involved in food safety, over 30 committees and subcommittees in Congress would be involved. I can’t imagine what it would take to get all 30 committees and subcommittees to come to agreement on how to reorganize the structure of federal food safety oversight.

In an attempt to address this issue of congressional stalemate over reorganizations, the National Commission on the Public Service, also known as the Volcker Commission, came to

the same conclusion that the President did in his management agenda: Congress should reauthorize the executive reorganization authority.

I agree with the President and with the Volcker Commission that executive reorganization authority may be the only way that we can realistically improve the efficiency and effectiveness of government operations. But it is essential for this Committee to include sufficient safeguards in the legislation that will address some of the biggest concerns raised by affected parties, especially those concerns made by the federal workforce, who will be directly impacted by any government reorganization.

I hope that today's discussion of executive reorganization authority is a thoughtful and fruitful one. I am well aware that there is reluctance in some groups to granting the President additional authority to make changes to the federal government. However, I hope that we can all come to the conclusion that certain operational restructurings that have a minimal impact on federal policy may best be initiated and developed by the "experts" in the executive branch rather than by the generalists within Congress.

We have gathered together an outstanding group of witnesses before us today who will provide Members of this Committee with perspectives from all sides of the issue as we move forward. I look forward to working with both the witnesses and the Members as we consider this important legislation.

I welcome all of the witnesses to today's hearing and I look forward to their testimony.

###